The Texas Map Society Program Committee, assisted by Houston member John English, has planned another outstanding meeting with exciting speakers, great tours, and exhibits. The meeting will be held in Houston, starting with a dinner cruise reception on Friday evening, April 4, 2008 followed by presentations on Saturday, April 5 at San Jacinto Battleground.

Friday evening our meeting will open with a dinner cruise on the Port of Houston’s M/V Sam Houston along the famed Houston Ship Channel. This is a spectacular way to see a side of Houston that few visitors and residents have experienced. Saturday morning we will convene at the San Jacinto Monument at the San Jacinto Battleground, located in La Porte, Texas, twenty minutes from downtown Houston. The San Jacinto Museum of History has allowed the Texas Map Society to conduct its meeting inside the San Jacinto Monument. The first presentation will be conducted by Texas Map Society President and Friends of the San Jacinto Battleground Director Jeff Dunn on the evolution of maps portraying the battle of San Jacinto. Jeff’s talk will be followed by a bus tour of battle sites where Jeff will talk to us further about the events that took place on the battlefield on April 20-21, 1836. This tour will provide a unique opportunity to visualize the battle and show how geography dramatically affected the outcome of the battle.

The bus tour will end at the Lynchburg Ferry (site of the oldest continuously operating ferry in Texas) where lunch will follow at the Monument Inn restaurant. After lunch the buses will return us to the Museum where Richard Francaviglia, University of Texas at Arlington Professor of History, geographer, and author will talk about the history of mapping the Texas coastline. Richard’s presentation will be followed by Houston geophysicist Bryan DeVault, who will speak on how maps are used to locate subsurface oil. Our final speaker will be Lisa Struthers, Curator at the San Jacinto Museum, who will give us a personal gallery talk on the Museum’s current map exhibition and take us on a tour of the Monument’s exhibits and library. We have a few other events in the planning stage.

Registration flyers will be sent to the membership and interested parties in February. In the meantime, please check our website at http://libraries.uta.edu/txmapsociety/ for up-to-date information regarding registration, hotel and driving directions or contact Secretary-Treasurer, Kit Goodwin at goodwin@uta.edu. The Texas Map Society will be partnering with The Friends of the San Jacinto Battleground, the San Jacinto Museum of History Association, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department on the Spring program. We look forward to seeing all of our members and friends at what is expected to be a terrific meeting.
Historic Postcards: Important Research Tools – if Used Carefully

by Richard Francaviglia

Of all the primary sources available to amateur and professional historians, few are as accessible as historic postcards. Prepared by the thousands beginning about 1900, postcards offer a glimpse of many subjects—landscapes, buildings, people, parades—as seen through popular culture. Postcards are sometimes classified as ephemera, that is, items that were meant to be used once, then discarded. We are fortunate, though, that some were kept for future generations, including historians. They can be found at antique stores, on line, and in archives.

The postcard itself has an interesting history. It was a natural outcome of improved mail service (ca. 1835), the rise of photography (ca. 1850), and printing processes that could reproduce photographic images in large numbers (ca. 1895). By about 1900, the postcard era dawned as people traveled widely and desired a cheap and attractive way to tell others about their experiences. The postcards they wrote and sent can reveal much about those travelers, of course, but how and what can those postcards tell us about the scenes and people portrayed on them?

The simple answer to this question is that postcards can be a gold mine of information to historians—provided that they are used carefully. Why this caveat? The answer lies in the motives of photographers and postcard companies. We might assume that the actual photographic image on a postcard is accurate. After all, the process seems easy and honest enough: all the photographer had to do is point the camera and click the shutter. In reality, though, it is far more complicated than this. Consider which subjects the photographer pointed his or her camera toward, and which were avoided. We have thousands of images of Main Streets from coast to coast, for example, but very few images of red light districts and garbage dumps. The reason, of course, is that they were edited out of the original selection process. This is understandable: Most photographers take pictures of things that are acceptable—and will be accepted by those who will purchase their photographs. This reminds us that taking any photo always involves editing, which is a form of censorship.

Then, too, even what is published as a photograph might not actually be what was seen, and photographed, by the photographer. Consider, for example, two postcards of the bridge connecting the United States and Mexico at El Paso, ca. 1915, which are from UT Arlington’s impressive Jenkins Garrett Postcard Collection. At first glance, each of these cards looks very different, and we naturally assume they were taken at different times. After all, the trolley car in one postcard is different from the one seen in the other, as is the landscape in the distance. Looking more closely for clues, however, we can spot things that are identical in both postcards. The people in the foreground are a case in point. The likelihood that a photographer could snap a picture with the exact arrangement of people dressed exactly the same way on two separate occasions is next to nil. Similarly, we can spot other identical elements. How, then, could these images appear different enough to look like scenes taken at very different times? The answer is darkroom magic. Looking closely, we can see that the seemingly different trolleys are really one trolley colored differently on the different post cards. In the darkroom and printing process, colors in a postcard, as well as actual objects, can be changed at will: Power poles and trolley wires may vanish, buildings may be moved, and people added or erased in the blink of an eye. Like all photographic products, postcards can be manipulated to make scenes look more interesting, and more impressive.

Another example of darkroom magic will suffice. In the early twentieth century, when any town of any consequence had a trolley line, several communities without such systems felt inadequate. Rather than construct a trolley line, some
simply hired photographers who, as darkroom magicians, "dodged in" (that is, added) an image of a trolley car from some other community. Viola! With slight-of-hand (and light, and chemicals), the town would have its own trolley line -- at least on paper! Similarly, peoples' appearances could be doctored, or re-touched, to make them appear nicer-looking, younger, etc. This type of alteration seems like something from the digital age (which now makes the process even easier), but we need only compare historical postcards with other images to confirm that a kind of darkroom magic was often used about a century ago.

Like all forms of historical documentation, postcards are evidence. But, as any trial lawyer knows, not all evidence deserves equal weight. We need to consult any evidence with some skepticism. Moreover, as historians, we should not believe that any one form of evidence is "true" until we consult other forms of evidence -- written, archaeological, and/or photographic -- to see how they compare. With this caveat in mind, I would like to note that postcards can be a fine source of information for historians. Note, for example, the scene of the suspension bridge at Waco, which is also from the Garrett Postcard Collection. The bridge itself is of interest, in fact a point of interest as it was a famous regional landmark. More interesting, perhaps, is the foreground, where people lounge in a park-like setting. The scene tells us a lot about the face of the city we are supposed to see. After all, the postcard photographer's goal is to sell the picture to the postcard company, whose ultimate goal is to make money selling the card to the public. That can help explain why so many postcards -- particularly those featuring colorized photographic images -- have such a beautiful, almost painterly look. The grass is green, the buildings crisply adorned, and even the sky always a serene cerulean blue. The most romantic postcards, perhaps, are those night scenes featuring a full moon whose light etches the outlines of scattered clouds -- a positively ethereal look that perfectly captured late Victorian romantic sentiments.

I frequently use historical postcards to illustrate scenes and people in the American West. What better way to illustrate the popularity of New Mexico's popular Montezuma Hotel, or El Paso's downtown during the early twentieth century? My point here is that postcards are important to historians not only for what they actually show, but the way in which they show it. They mirror the aesthetics of the era in which they were made. If buildings like those downtown or on a college campus were prominent elements in a community in say, 1920, then what better way for the historian to illustrate those places -- provided, of course, that they inform readers that the magic of the scene may be engineered to conform to the aesthetics of the period.

Researchers should understand that the quality and content of postcards varies. Like places and peoples' dress, postcards evolved -- from color lithographic works of art in about 1910 to more straightforward graphically reproduced scenes of the 1950s and 1960s. As communications further improved in the 1970s and long-distance telephoning became easier and cheaper, postcards rapidly declined in popularity. Since the 1990s, postcards have become scarce -- as a relative of mine who recently sought to purchase postcard images of Arlington recently learned one evening. Upon inquiring, we determined that the local Wal-Mart was one of the only places here in Arlington, Texas, that sold them. However, when my relative arrived, the person at a checkout counter said "Sorry, we do not have any."

My relative left Wal-Mart (and town) disappointed, but the next day I went there to check for myself. Sure enough, in an obscure part of the store stood a full postcard rack! It is easy to blame a young checkout clerk for that error, until we realize he or she may never have received, much less sent, a picture postcard. After all, that clerk can now simply position his or her cell phone, take a photographic image, and send it to a relative instantaneously via e-mail. Interestingly, though, the digital images that he or she takes may be lost to future historians.

The age of the postcard has come and gone, and that should serve as a reminder that postcards, like all historical documents, are worth a closer look -- and serious study.

Editor's Note: Richard Francaviglia is professor of History and Geography at UT Arlington, where he also serves as Director, Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography.
New Book Documents New Mexico’s Palace of The Governors

The Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe is one of the oldest European buildings in North America, and the oldest existing state capitol building in the United States. The building’s fascinating history comes to life in this easy-to-read, horizontal-format book by Emily Abbink. As you flip through the pages upon opening this book, you’ll notice that the text is fairly sparse but that it is superbly illustrated with modern day photographs, line drawings, paintings and numerous maps. In addition to beautifully-reproduced historical maps, the modern maps by Deborah Reade are of special interest to the reader, for they summarize what was happening in Santa Fe and vicinity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Appropriately, this book begins with a discussion of the area’s pre-Spanish history -- the Native New Mexicans who occupied sites like Chaco Canyon and the many pueblos in the Upper Rio Grande Valley. This was a wise choice, for their presence dictated the location of later Spanish activity, especially the founding of Santa Fe in 1609. This first chapter is called “Exploration” (1509-1609) and it is followed by “Exploitation” (1609-1709) and “Accommodation” (1709-1809). During those two centuries, Santa Fe became and remained Spain’s northern-most outpost in North America. The chapter “Political Transformation” (1809-1909) covers the arrival and ultimate dominance of the United States in the affairs of Santa Fe. By the end of this period, Santa Fe had been bypassed by most of the economic activity and its plaza was “fading.” The Palace of the Governors was almost demolished at this time, but was saved in part by a group of citizens who sought to rediscover and promote the city’s past. “A Century of Innovation” (1909-2009) summarizes many of the changes experienced by the Palace and downtown Santa Fe. In the Epilogue, called “A Century of Anticipation” (2009-2109), Abbink predicts that the Palace “will continue to serve, safeguarding the past and preserving the values of New Mexico’s diverse population for decades to come” (p. 119). She also underscores the building’s versatility, noting that it “has served New Mexicans as a capitol, military stronghold, royal residence, prison, market and transportation center, post office, bank, historical society, and museum” (p. 119).

New Mexico’s Palace of the Governors -- History of an American Treasure is not a scholarly book but rather meant to introduce a wide range of visitors to a New Mexico landmark. In this, it succeeds admirably. It is available from the Museum of New Mexico Press, c/o UNM Press Order Dept., 1312 Baschert SE, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87106-4363, 800 249-7737 (phone) or 800 622-8667 (fax), E-mail: anna.gallegos@state.nm.us.
Paul Rutschmann is Center’s New Graduate Research Assistant

Paul Rutschmann became the Center’s Sandra Myres Graduate Research Assistant in January of 2008. Paul considers himself to be a “late bloomer to the academic world,” having spent fifteen years as a professional dancer of classical ballet on the stages of America and Europe. In 2001, Paul enrolled at UT Arlington, where two years later he received his bachelor’s degree in economics. Instead of choosing economics as a subject for graduate studies, however, he decided to devote his graduate years in the pursuit of historical enquiry. During the course of Master’s studies, he was particularly keen on studying questions concerning the uses and abuses of the methodology of comparability or non-comparability of various forms of atrocities committed within and beyond the borders of a given nation. The Munich student resistance movement, the White Rose, has been a topic of several papers for the classes he took towards the Master’s degree. In one paper, which was recently published in Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television, he conducted a comparative analysis of two German filmmakers of the White Rose in relation to the historiography of resistance. Paul is currently a doctoral candidate at UTA, and as a cultural and intellectual historian, he will be broadening his interests to pursue questions regarding American relations with Nazi Germany’s party representatives who worked in the United States.

With his considerable research skills, and mastery of German and French, Paul will help expand the horizons of Center research. Given varied French interests in Texas and Mexico, and the strong German presence in Texas, previously untapped sources in UT Arlington’s Special Collections await his scrutiny at the request of the ten Center Fellows, who have a strong interest in the region’s history.

Jonathan Wilson Receives the Ida V. Hall and George Kohfeldt Scholarship

Recently awarded the Ida V. Hall and George Kohfeldt Scholarship, Jonathan Wilson has what he calls “a personal investment” in the Native American Southwest. His mother, Aurelia Delphia Sandoval, was born and raised in San Luis Potosi, Mexico -- the daughter of indigenous and Spanish parents. Jonathan’s father, Jonathan J. Wilson, was born in Bluffton, Indiana of Scottish and German parents, but established the family home in the southeastern corner of New Mexico. Born and raised in Artesia, NM, it seems Jonathan was destined by heritage, culture, and location to exist in, as he puts it, “the in-between spaces.” His identity is then not only bifurcated, multi-racial, and multicultural, but liminal is all respects. His own questions of self, place, and home now influence his research, writing, and examination of ethnic writing from both their traditional literary value and his personal stake in the matter.

At the outset of his college career, Jonathan had no idea that literature and writing offered a means of not only identifying with characters and authors who share similar multicultural, multi-racial ancestries and lives, but that writing would provide him the opportunity to enter that discourse. Already firmly grounded in the Southwest, he relocated 150 miles north of his home town in order to attend Eastern New Mexico University, where he completed his BA and MA degrees in the field of English Studies. After winning both the Undergraduate Award for Excellence in literature and Outstanding Hispanic Student in Language and Literatures, ENMU provided him with a Graduate Teaching Assistantship and direction in what would eventually become his area of specialization -- Native American Literatures.

Continuing his education at UT Arlington, Jonathan was awarded a Graduate Assistantship and Graduate Fellowship which has allowed him to further his personal and research interest in areas of Native American Studies and traditional Western literature, while honing his teaching skills. He was named the 2005-2006 O’Neill Graduate Teaching Assistant of the Year at the UT Arlington, and also the mentor and sponsor for back-to-back winners of the Duncan Robin Essay contest for the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 academic years. But most important to his research goals, UT Arlington also provided Jonathan the privilege to learn from Dr. Kenneth Roemer, a distinguished scholar and professor in the field of Native American Studies. Under Roemer’s tutelage, Jonathan is nearing completion of his dissertation, “Notion of Home in the Writing of Louise Erdrich.”

Thus, UT Arlington has given Jonathan the opportunity to delve deeper into his own heritage and place within Southwestern Studies, while providing him with the research and pedagogy tools that have led to his current position as both Ph.D. candidate at UT Arlington and Assistant Professor of English at his former alma mater, Eastern New Mexico University -- which is in the place he calls home.
Meet the Center Faculty

Dr. Robert B. Fairbanks is Professor of History and the new Chair of UT Arlington’s History Department. An urban historian focusing on cities of the Southwest, he has published more than 30 journal articles and book chapters and has had recent articles appearing in the Western Historical Quarterly and the Journal of Urban History. He has written or edited four books including For the City as a Whole: Planning, Politics, and the Public Interest in Dallas, Texas, 1900-1965, part of the Urban Life and Landscape Series published by The Ohio State University Press. He is near completion of a book manuscript entitled The Fight Against Slums in the Southwest: Public Housing and Urban Redevelopment in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona, 1933-1954. He has also initiated a study of suburban cities in the Southwest. In addition to his research, Fairbanks served on the story line team of the Old Red Museum of Dallas County History and Culture. He also is Editor for the Americas for Planning Perspectives: An International Journal of History, Planning and the Environment, and is on the Board of Directors of the Urban History Association.

Texas Map Society to Hold Joint Session at TSHA Meeting in Corpus Christi

The Texas Map Society will present a session on “Maps, Texas, and Technology” at the Texas State Historical Association meeting in Corpus Christi, March 5-8, 2008. Presentations include: Josh Been, “Texas Time Machine: Cartographic Time Travel with GIS.” Ben Huseman, “When Is a Picture Worth a Thousand Words?: Maps and Images of Antebellum Texas Online.” Joan Kilpatrick, “Seeing Old Friends in New Ways: GLO Land Grant Maps Now with GIS.”

For more information, contact the Texas State Historical Association at www.TSHAonline.org or call/phone TSHA (512) 697-1200.

Center Fellows:

Kat Brown, Assistant Professor of Anthropology; Chris Conway, Associate Professor of Modern Languages; Robert Fairbanks, Professor of History; George Green, Professor of History; Sam Haynes, Associate Professor of History; David Narrett, Associate Professor of History; Dennis Reinhartz, Professor of History; Douglas Richmond, Professor of History; Ken Roemer, Professor of English; Roberto Treviño, Associate Professor of History

Associate Center Fellows:

David Buissereet, Jenkins and Virginia Garrett Endowed Chair in Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography (retired); Judy Reinhartz, Professor of Education, UTEP

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